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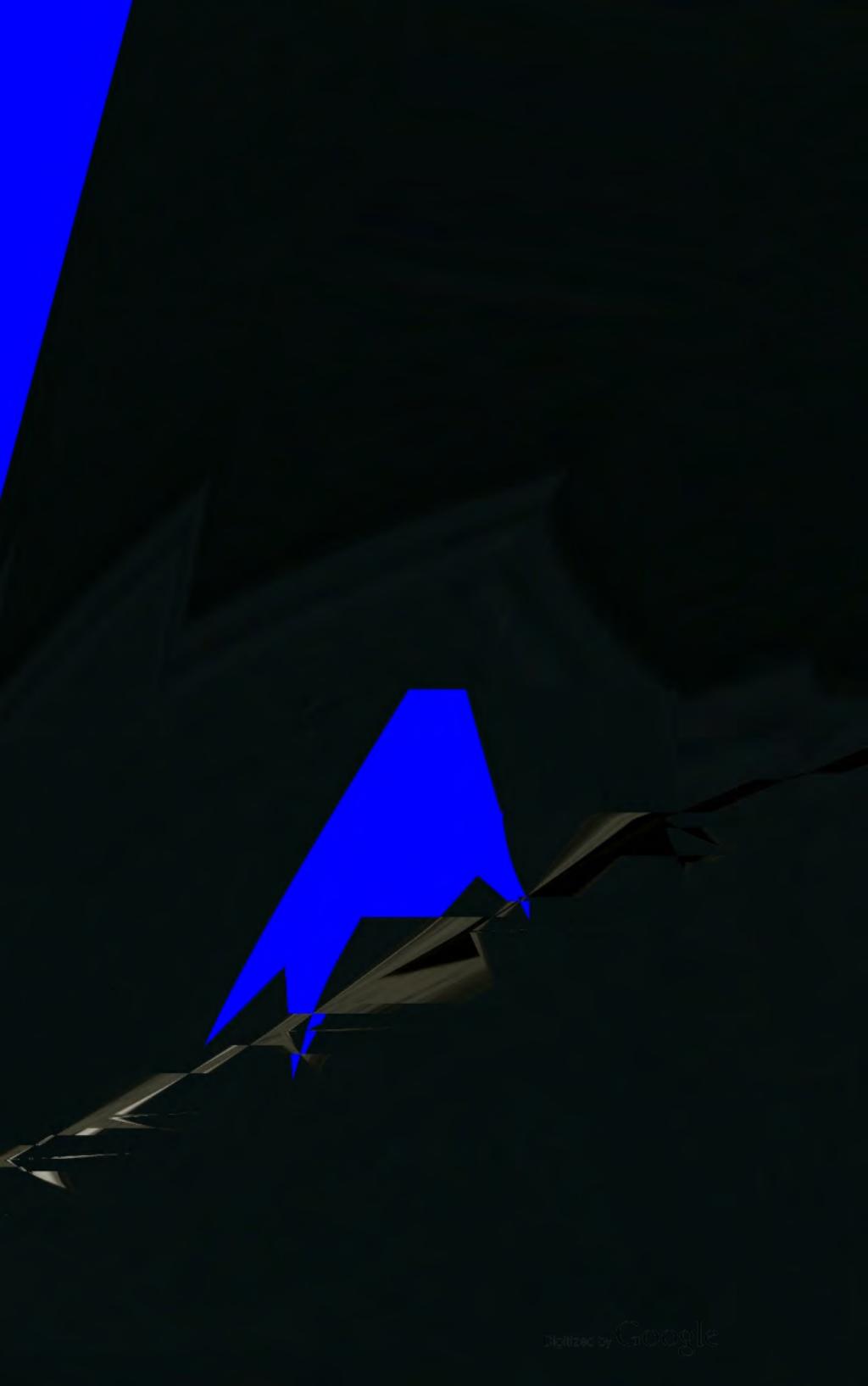
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*Simple stories to amuse and
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Simple stories

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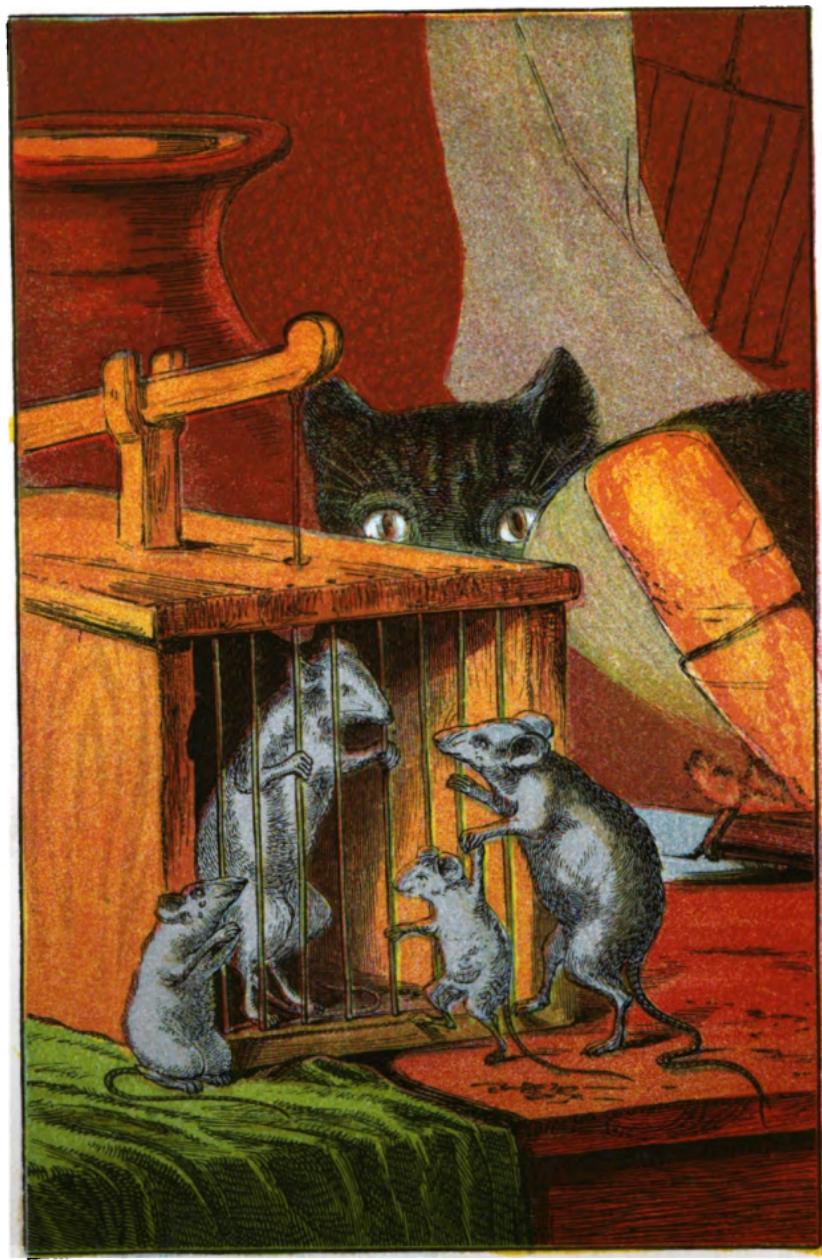


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SIMPLE STORIES.

**PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY
EDINBURGH AND LONDON**



SIMPLE STORIES.

SIMPLE STORIES

TO

Amuse and Instruct Young Readers.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM P. NIMMO.
1870.



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I.

THE LITTLE GIRL AND THE CAT.

ALITTLE girl called Amy was one day seated in the garden playing with her two dolls, when a pretty cat made its appearance at the gate, and stood looking at the child as if it were not sure whether to venture in or not.

“Pussy, pussy, come pussy!” called Amy, and the cat came running to her side, and rubbed its soft head against the little girl’s cheek, as she stooped to stroke its pretty fur.

Pussy was quite delighted, and purred loudly to testify her satisfaction, and Amy was quite happy to play with it, and caressed it fondly.

VOL. V.

A

And so they loved each other, and were for the moment the greatest of friends.

But the child became naughty, and pulled poor pussy's tail.

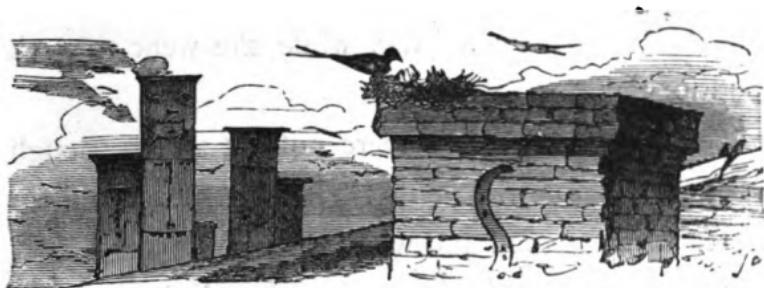
Then pussy was angry with Amy for being so unkind, and would not purr any more.

They did not love each other now, they were no longer friends.

Pussy would not play any more with the little girl who had been so cruel and wicked, and ran away.

And so Amy was left alone. As soon as her little friend was gone she was sorry for what she had done, but it was too late then, and she resolved to be more kind and thoughtful for the future, for wicked people and naughty children have no friends.





II.

THE NEST AT THE TOP OF THE CHIMNEY.

TWO little birds once built their nest at the very top of a high chimney.

In this nest there were four eggs, and very soon the eggs opened, and four little birds without any feathers came out of them.

But the mother had plenty nice soft feathers, and she took the little ones under her wings and warmed them.

By and bye the little birds grew, and began to

have feathers of their own. Then the mother was able to leave them a little, while she went to seek food for them.

The little birds' wings were not yet strong enough to fly, and before the mother left them she gave them a great deal of good and wise advice.

"Do not leave the house, my dear little ones, till I return," were her last words; which meant, "do not leave the nest."

But as soon as the mother was gone, a disobedient little bird, who thought itself quite strong and able to go alone, began to wish to go out of the nest. It came to the very edge, and stretched its head over the side of the nest, and then it stood up on its two little trembling feet.

"Oh what a naughty little bird," you will say, "to disobey its mother!" But the little one paid dearly for being so rash, for it fell into the chimney.

And when the father and mother returned they could only find three of their little ones in the nest.

"Our brother is lost; he has fallen into the chimney," cried the three little ones all at once.

And the father and mother, and three little ones, were all very sorry and sad for a long time.

One child's disobedience can make a whole family unhappy.





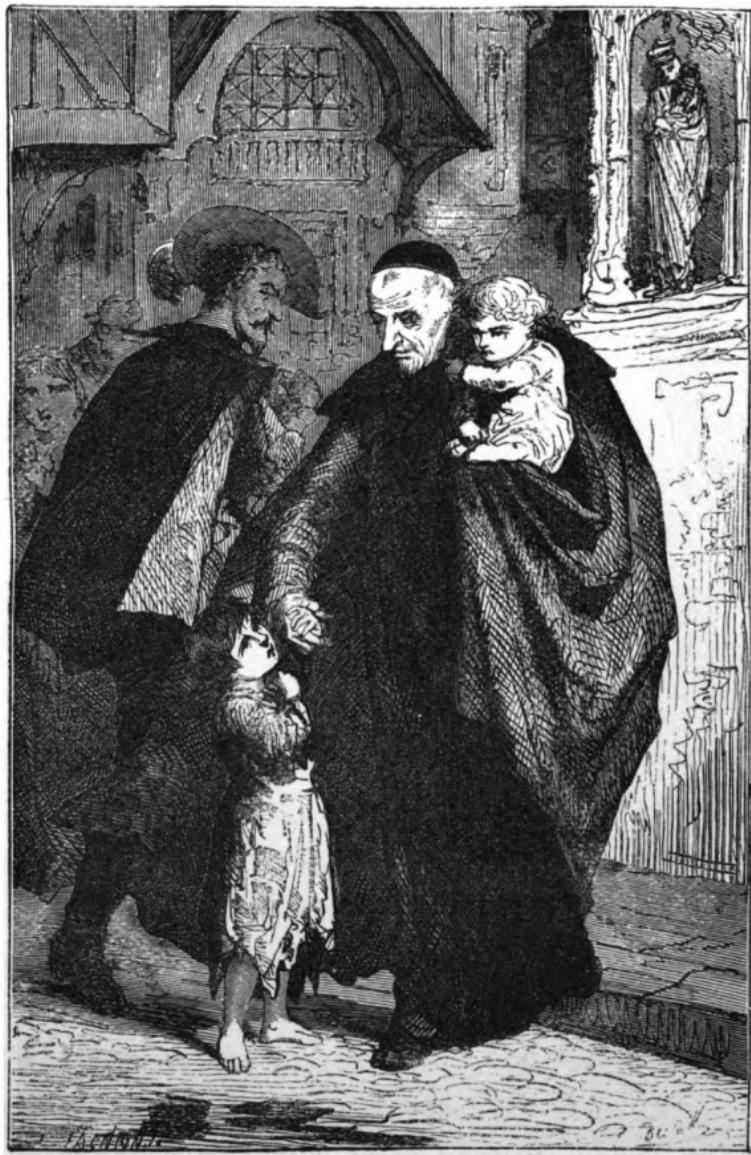
III

BOOKS AND THEIR VALUE.

JHERE was once a little boy called Jack. Jack was only four years and a half old, but he was very fond of stories. "Tell me something, please, mamma," he often said, as he brought his little footstool to his mother's side, and then she told him many pretty stories.

One day she told him about St Vincent Paul, that angel of goodness who went about the streets gathering together little lost, starving children, and took them to his home and fed them, and was father and mother and everything to them.

"Mamma, do you know St Vincent Paul?" asked Jack, when his mamma had finished.



"Oh, no, darling," replied the mother. "St Vincent Paul has been dead a great many years now."

"But how do you know all that he has done, then?" asked the child.

"I have read it in a book," answered his mother.

Another day, his mamma told him the story of Joan of Arc, who was a young French shepherdess, famed in history for her extraordinary courage and daring.

"Mamma, did you ever see Joan of Arc?" asked Jack, when the story was finished.

"No, Jack, never," said his mother. "Joan of Arc has been dead still longer than St Vincent Paul."

"Then how can you know what she did?" asked the child again.

"I have read all about her," replied his mother.

Jack's mamma once told him of some travellers who had crossed the great rolling sea in large ships, and had arrived in a country where the soil is composed entirely of sand; where the people had black skins instead of white; where there were large four-footed animals with enormous humps on their backs; trees which bore fruit full of juice as white and sweet as milk; and many other wonderful things which greatly interested little Jack.

"Have you ever been in that country, mamma?"

and have you seen all those strange things?" asked the boy again.

"Oh, no, dear ; it is too far away," said the mother.

"Then how do you know what it is like?" asked the child.

"Because I have read about it," said his mamma.

One day when his mamma had gone out, Jack began to weary very much, because he thought he would have no story all that day.

Then he began to think if all his mother's beautiful stories were to be found in books, he might try and find some out for himself.

So he went and took a book from the table, but poor little Jack quite forgot that he had not yet been taught to read, and so when he opened it, he saw nothing but funny black marks all over the white paper.

He shut the book and opened it at another place, but still there were only the strange little black marks to be seen upon the white paper.

He turned the pages over and over, but from the beginning to the end it was all the same thing.

Jack felt that this book was quite beyond him, and as he could not understand anything in it, he put it back to its place. Then he began to weary

more than ever, but at last he fell fast asleep as he sat waiting and watching for his mother.

As soon as she returned, Jack awoke and ran to meet her.

“Mamma,” he asked, eagerly, “what must I do before I can understand all the pretty stories in your book?”

“My child,” replied his mother, “you must learn to read!”

MORAL.

Learn to read that you may become wise; cultivate your mind and enrich it with the experience and discoveries of great men.





IV.

THE LOST BIRD.

LITTLE Edith was playing in her mother's room one day.

In this room there was a very wide fireplace; but there was no fire in it now, for it was spring-time, and the days were warm and sunny.

All at once there was a strange fluttering noise heard in the chimney. Edith was very frightened, and wished to hide herself; but her mother took hold of her hand, and led her to the fireplace.

"Come with me, dear, and we shall see what is making this strange noise," she said.

The little girl did as she was told, and when they

had looked up the great black chimney, they discovered a poor little bird clinging to the wall, which presently fell at Edith's feet, trembling with fear.

It was the fluttering of its wings which had made the strange noise that had frightened Edith so much.

The little girl raised the trembling bird very gently. She was quite delighted to have it in her hands, and never thought of it being frightened.

“The little bird is not happy here, Edith,” said her mother, “for it is separated from its father and mother ; and they will also be very sad, because they have lost their little one.”

“Let us send it back to its father and mother,” said Edith, who was a good little girl, and had a kind heart ; “but see, mamma, it cannot fly yet ; it is not strong enough !”

So they put the bird into a cage, and they put the open cage out at the window ; and very soon they saw the father and mother fly round about it, and at last go inside and tenderly welcome their little lost one.

When the little bird became strong enough to use its wings, it flew away. But when evening came, and the tired little bird wished to sleep, it did not go back to its nest, it did not shelter itself among the branches

of the trees ; it came and knocked at Edith's window, and perched itself in the little cage which had been its home when it was lost and helpless.

And every morning, after it had sung its song of thanks, it departed ; but it always returned in the evening.

For all its little life long it remembered the kind action that had been done to it by Edith.





V.

THE HAPPY FAMILY.

HIS is the picture of a watch-dog.

This great dog was kept the whole day attached to his kennel by an iron chain, and he wearied very much, because he was a solitary captive.

He had only one friend, and this was a beautiful little cat that stayed in the house, and with which he had always been great friends.

One day pussy heard the great dog whining and

barking most piteously. She could not play any longer, she was so troubled, and went to see if she could amuse him.

Soon after this, pussy had a family of little ones, but she did not know where she could put them to keep them safe. The poor mother was very anxious about her children. She would have liked to have sheltered them in a comfortable house where they would be safe and warm.

The great dog guessed what pussy was wanting, and one day when she was going past with a very troubled face, he called the little cat, took her into his kennel, and left her sole mistress of his dwelling. Pussy was very happy, and very soon had all her little ones installed in the kind dog's house. She fed them and brought them up there, and all this time the good dog slept outside, on the cold ground, without complaining once.

So when the little kittens grew, and were able to go out and in the kennel, the kind watch-dog was no longer alone ; for he was surrounded by friends who loved him, caressed him, and played with him all day.

And though the great dog was still a captive, he was no longer weary, for he was quite happy in the

midst of the little family, who were so much indebted to him.





VI.

THE NEW-YEAR'S GIFT.

THERE was once a little brother and sister, called Charles and Caroline. It was New-Year's Day—a day when every little boy and girl expect to have at least one present.

These little children's father and mother were not rich, but they were not poor either; and so, besides many other little gifts, Charlie and Caroline found themselves the happy possessors of ten shillings each to spend on whatever they liked best.

Their mamma took them to a beautiful toy-shop in the town, and told them to take their choice of the pretty things around them.

Caroline was very fond of dolls. She could not have too many of them ; and so she bought ten shillings' worth of dolls ! She got a great many for that, and there were all kinds—ladies, servants, babies, gentlemen ; fourteen people altogether—that is to say, fourteen dolls.

Caroline was quite burdened with such a large family, and her brother noticed her perplexity.

“ I would like very much to buy a carriage to put all those people into,” said he.

“ Oh yes, do, dear Charlie ! ” cried Caroline, quite delighted ; “ we will play together. Buy a carriage ; but it must be a very beautiful one.”

“ Oh, yes, it must be very beautiful. Let me see some carriages, please,” said Charles to the shopman.

The shopman immediately produced a splendid carriage, drawn by two magnificent white horses, harnessed with silk and gold. On the box was seated a great fat coachman, frizzed and powdered, and dressed in a scarlet coat, yellow breeches, and white stockings. Behind the carriage stood two footmen in the same costume.

“ Oh, how beautiful ! that is the very thing ! ” cried both the children at once. “ How much is this carriage ? ” asked Charles, with a very important air.

"Ten shillings," replied the shopman.

"There they are, then," said Charles, placing his two crown-pieces on the counter. The next thing to be done was to instal the dolls in their lovely carriage, and the children set about their work eagerly. But what was their disappointment when they discovered that there was only room for four !

"What are we to do with all the others?" asked Caroline, looking at her brother disconsolately.

"The others!" replied Charlie, equally perplexed.

Then their mamma, who had accompanied the children, seeing their difficulty, advised them.

"Instead of buying a carriage, why not buy an omnibus, when you have so many people to put inside? It is not so pretty, perhaps, but there would be plenty of room for every one."

And the shopman brought forward a large omnibus, made exactly like the real ones which carry you from one end of London to the other.

The brother and sister looked at it, and at each other, and consulted about it a long time before they could come to any decision. The carriage was so beautiful, but the omnibus would be so useful! With the one, only four would be provided for; with the other, fourteen !

Charlie saw all those advantages in a moment, and pointed them out to his sister, who was still gazing with longing eyes at the glittering carriage, with its gay horses, and footmen blazing in scarlet and gold.

"Yes, I think you are quite right, Charlie," she said at last, with a sigh. "I know it will be more useful, and so we shall just take it."

"You have done well, my dear children," said their mamma, who had been looking on all the while, wondering how her little ones would decide. "I am glad you are able to prefer the useful to the ornamental; do not be attracted by pomp and show, and always remember that 'All is not gold that glitters!'"





VII.

SERVANT AND FRIEND.



HORSE was one day feeding quietly in a beautiful green meadow.

At one end of the meadow there was a road, and the horse came every now and then to watch the people as they passed along.

Among the passengers was a good, honest man, who went to the neighbouring town every day to buy bread for his little ones at home. He passed very near the gate, and the horse neighed after him as if it were bidding him good-morning.

Then the man stopped for a minute to caress the horse, speak to him kindly, and pat his neck gently, after which he continued his way.

Another man who went to the town every day, took the same road. He was a hard, cruel man, but

the horse did not know this, and ran and saluted him like the first.

But the cruel man, instead of caressing him, cracked a great whip over him, and the poor horse galloped away into the middle of the field, shaking his smarting head.

While the two men were in the town a heavy rain began to fall, and the small stream near the meadow, which they had to cross on their return, was swollen into a river.

The good, kind man arrived first, but alas ! how was he to get across ? The water was still rising, and he must either submit to plunge in up to the waist, or wait till it had subsided.

But the man could not wait ; he was taking home bread for supper, and his little children were hungry. He was just about deciding to walk through the water at the risk of catching a bad cold, when he heard a neigh in the meadow.

He recognised the voice ; it was the horse he had caressed in the morning, and he called him to come and help him.

The horse leapt over the gate in a moment, and approached the kind man whom he immediately recognised.

The man jumped on his back, and the wise horse crossed the water without any difficulty, and landed his friend on the other side. And the good man did not get the least wet, not even the sole of his shoe.

Then the horse returned to the meadow.

Presently the cruel man returned from the town ; he had seen what the horse had just done, and so, wishing to be carried over the stream also, he called on him to come as coaxingly as he could.

But the horse, recognising the man who had struck him in the morning, would not look near. He fled to the very other end of the meadow, and left him to his fate.

And the unkind man was obliged either to get soaked, or wait till the waters decreased.

It is only when the master is the friend of his servant, that the servant is the friend of his master.





VIII.

THE STORY OF A SEED.

THIS is the picture of a little girl called Minnie. She was such a sweet gentle child that every one loved her.

Minnie's mamma had three of those pretty little yellow birds called canaries, the first of which came from those warm sunny isles near Africa, called the Canary Isles. Minnie was very fond of those birds, and it was she who cared for them, fed them, and cleaned their cage every day. As she never frightened them, they had no fear of her; they liked to see her coming near them, and sang their most beautiful songs by way of thanking her for

all her kindness. When their cage was opened they would fly on to their young mistress's shoulder, or perch themselves on her finger.

They were not the least unhappy at being shut up in a cage, because they had been born there and brought up in it for a good while by their father and mother.

Canaries come from a country where the sun shines all day long, and they are very fond of it. Minnie knew this, and so she often put their cage out at the window to let them catch some of his rays.

Canaries eat sugar, hard-boiled eggs, bread, linseed, and chickweed. One day, Minnie saw that some of the seeds had fallen from the cage on to the ground ; she was going to pick them all carefully up, but her mamma told her to let them remain.

“Leave them, my daughter,” she said ; “let those seeds stay in the earth, and you will see what will happen !”

It was spring-time, that season of the year when everything begins to bud and blossom. About a week afterwards, Minnie perceived a little green point appearing where the seeds used to be, but

so small, so very small, that it only peeped through the earth. Minnie took care not to touch it, for she knew it was God who had made it grow there, and she wished to know what He was going to do with it. The next day, the little green point had grown larger ; it was a little bit above the ground, and you could see the little seed at the end of the stalk. But the seed was open and empty, and its contents had remained in the earth, and given birth to this little stalk.

Next day, Minnie came and looked at it again ; it had grown larger, and two little leaves were already beginning to form.

“ Ah,” said Minnie, “ it is a bunch of chickweed that is going to grow here, and my birds love it so much ; how happy they will be ! ”

Minnie did not like to leave her dear little plant, it seemed so weak and helpless yet, and would be so easily pulled out of the ground and broken, that the little girl was kept very anxious about it ; as if God, who made the very tiniest leaf, was not always there to protect it !

However, Minnie must go to school ; and, as she was a good little girl, she never let anything come between her and her duty ; but every evening, when

she returned, she went and looked at her little plant, and examined it carefully, and every evening she saw that the stalk was growing higher.

The two first leaves were now pretty large, and below them were other two, which were also growing every day ; and then came two new ones. The stalk itself was growing, and Minnie no longer needed to kneel down and peer into the earth to see it.

“Oh, my little birds,” said she to her canaries, “sing, for you have sowed a little seed which is growing, and it will be all for you !”

Minnie now began to be impatient for the little seeds to grow on the top of the stalk, but still they were nowhere to be seen.

“Wait a little, my child,” said her mamma. “Wait ; everything requires time. What is done in a hurry is always badly done ;” and the little girl was obedient, and waited patiently.

At last, one day, two more leaves opened, and Minnie all at once saw between those leaves—what ? a cluster of seeds or flowers,—those seeds for which she had waited so long. She would have liked to pluck them at once, and given them to her canaries, but it was too green. Minnie thought it was not ripe enough yet, and so she did not pull it up.

Little by little the leaves opened more and more, and the flowers grew down the stalk a good way. Minnie thought this was the fruit, but one morning when she went to look at it, all the flowers were gone, and nothing but little green balls remained. Minnie was very much surprised, and very sorry that all the flowers were gone. She thought that she had been deceived, but her mamma comforted her, and told her that this was really the fruit. She explained to her that nearly all plants produce blossoms first, and that it is those flowers which afterwards form themselves into fruit.

Her mamma assured her that the fruit would very soon come, and she repeated that it only required a little time.

But Minnie thought it would be a very long time, and began to get angry, and say that she wished it immediately.

“ Ah, well, my little daughter, pull it up now, and your little birds will have nothing. You cannot hurry God’s work.”

Minnie felt she had been naughty, and begged her mother to forgive her, promising to be obedient and patient.

After a few days the flowers fell off, and in their

places remained real seeds, at first very small, and soft, and green ; but gradually they grew, and in a short time they became so large that the little stalk bent beneath their weight.

"You may now pluck your little plant, Minnie," said her mamma one day. "You have given it plenty of time to grow, and it is now ripe."

You can imagine how happy the little girl was then. She thanked her mother with all her heart for having given her such good advice, and God who had made such beautiful things, and arranged everything so wisely.

Then Minnie joyfully plucked the little plant, and placed it in the cage of her much-loved birds.





IX.

LESSONS FROM A GOAT.

MR ARNOT one day took his little daughter with him to the Zoological Gardens.

This little girl's name was Julia. She was quite delighted with this beautiful walk, because there is a fine menagerie in those gardens, where there are all sorts of animals—lions, tigers, elephants, birds, and a collection of pretty little goats.

Julia had a penny, and as there was a man selling

toys of sugar and cakes at the entrance to the gardens, it was necessary that this penny should be spent.

But what was she to buy with it? A penny will not buy very much. She saw some very tempting pink and white candy, and she thought she would like some of that.

"But," said Julia to herself, "after I have eaten it, there would be nothing left!"

"Would she take a trumpet instead?" asked the man. But the sound of this instrument is not very sweet, even at the best, and if its frail pipe were broken, there would soon be an end to all music.

"A balloon?" It would very soon burst.

"A doll?" What if its legs or arms tumbled off?

With this, Julia caught sight of some small rolls, which were very unlikely things to attract the fancy of a little girl who had a penny to spend on whatever she liked best.

But Julia did not hesitate any longer, for she knew that animals liked bread, and so she bought two rolls, that she might give a little pleasure to the poor captives.

You see this dear little girl had a kind heart. First of all, Julia and her papa gave the elephant a bite of the bread. This huge animal seized the little morsel

by the end of his long trunk with the utmost cleverness, and then put it into its great mouth, which would have held a whole dozen of rolls without the least difficulty. Then they passed on to the giraffe, and as it could not stretch its long neck through the iron railings, Mr Arnot put the little piece of bread on the end of his stick, and handed it into the cage.

They went on to the camel, to the antelopes, ostriches, and each had their small share. But unfortunately the rolls were not large, and a very little piece remained when Julia found herself face to face with a charming family of white goats. Those little animals were assembled in a small park carpeted with beautiful green turf, and enclosed with a pretty wire railing. In the middle of this park was a little wooden shed strewed with hay, which had a most appetising perfume. Nothing could be cleaner or prettier than this little habitation.

At the outside of the shed lay the father, his head raised and eyes half closed, as if he were sleeping and watching both at once.

Here and there around him played the young goats, with their horns just beginning to peep out through their shaggy hair. The mother seemed to pay no attention to her family, and, with her two feet

on the fence, she bleated to the passers-by; as if soliciting their caresses.

“Oh, what a lovely goat!” cried Julia. “You shall have all the rest of my bread; take it all to yourself.”

At the first words, the goat put its nose through the railings, but all at once smelling the bread, which it was on the point of seizing, it jumped down and shook its pretty head, as if it were saying, “No, thank you.”

“Stay!” said Julia, very much surprised; “why will it not take my bread? Do goats not like bread?”

But another child passed, then a lady, then a gentleman, and the goat ate every bit of bread they offered. Julia presented hers a second time, but the goat smelt it again, and still shook its head. The little girl was very much grieved, and could not understand why the goat always refused her bread. She almost felt inclined to get angry with the animal, but she restrained herself, and turning to one of the keepers, she asked him if the bread was good enough.

“Have you offered it only to the goat, my child?” asked the man.

“Oh, no; the elephant, and the giraffe, and the birds have all had some.”

“And have they eaten it?”

“Oh, yes ; every one of them,” said Julia.

“Then the bread must be good enough. Are your hands quite clean, my child ?”

Julia looked at her hands, and was surprised to see that they had got soiled ; for she had taken off her gloves while feeding the animals.

“But why does the goat alone refuse my bread, when all the other animals have taken it ?”

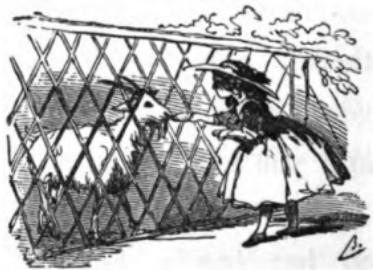
“Because goats are less greedy and more particular and delicate than the others. They would rather do without a pleasure than accept anything which is offensive to them. See, my child, here is some water ; wash your hands, then take the bread back to the goat, and you will see it is all true I have told you.”

Julia washed her hands, and returned to the little white goat. She offered her bread again, and this time the goat ate it with very evident pleasure.

“Thank you, dear little goat, for the lesson you have given me,” said the gentle girl ; “I will profit by it, and never forget it.”

Never forget, dear children, when you are wrong, and your fault is found out, to thank the friend

who tells you of it, instead of being cross and angry, and remember how Julia thanked the little white goat.





X.

LESSONS FROM THE VINE.

NOT long ago there lived a little boy called Fred.

One day the gardener came to his father's house to prune the fruit-trees and vines; and Fred, to whom his father had given three small plants, followed him into the garden that he might see how it was done.

The gardener had a large knife in his hand, with a round point, and this he used very skilfully and with great vigour.

He examined each plant and looked over all the new buds carefully. Then he took his knife and cut away all that he thought necessary, and soon there was very little wood left about the vines.

"Why have you taken away all that?" asked Fred, pointing to the fallen branches. "If you cut off so much, there will be no grapes in summer."

"They will come all in good time, my little boy," said the gardener, "and they will be all the better for this bad, useless stuff being away. There will be more grapes, and consequently more wine."

Fred did not ask the gardener *how* the vines should be pruned, and he cut his own three plants according to his own fancy, believing that he had done the vine an enormous deal of good.

Spring came, and the vines blossomed; summer followed, and the raisins ripened; and when autumn came round the grapes were magnificent; the plants bent under their load. Fred had never seen so many grapes.

"I cut my vine so well, it ought to bear a great deal of fruit," he thought.

Fred hastened to the end of the garden where stood the three plants which he had pruned in spring. But what a sad surprise! what a disappointment! Fred's vines were laden with a perfect forest of branches and leaves. But as for grapes, there were none, or nearly none; two little grapes among three plants!

Poor bewildered Fred then understood that he must not have pruned them rightly, and so he went to look for the gardener.

"Zadok," said the boy, "will you be kind enough to show me what I ought to have done to make my vines produce plenty of fruit?"

"My boy," said the gardener, "you must first learn the difference between the good and the bad wood, and be sure that you take all the useless parts away."

And this is what each one of you, dear children, must do in the garden of your own hearts. Search out all the weeds and all the roots of bitterness, lest they grow up and choke the good seed, and, like those vine plants, you bear no fruit.





XI.

LILLA AND HER FLOWERS.

LILLA HOPE lived with her mother in a very small room at the top of a high stair.

Her mother was a widow, Lilla an orphan, and both were very poor.

Lilla's mother worked incessantly from morning till night, that she might gain their bread, and the little girl, seated by her side, helped her mother, and sewed as fast as her little fingers could go.

But, notwithstanding all their industry, their earnings were not sufficient, and very often the poor mother deprived herself of food, that her child might want for nothing.

The mother and daughter loved each other with all their hearts, and were quite happy when they were together. Lilla was very careful to be a good girl, that she might comfort and please her mother, and the latter did her best to teach and amuse her child.

They were both very fond of flowers, but as they had no garden, they had planted some in a wooden box on their window-sill, which fortunately looked towards the sun.

There were roses, mignonette, convolvulus, and a great many other pretty things; but how joyful Lilla was when they began to bud and blossom! She tended them with the greatest care, watered them, and took away any little insects which were likely to hurt her dear flowers.

Then she put little slips of wood into the box, and fixed them together all round with fine cord, so that when the convolvulus grew, it crept along and through the tiny fence, and very soon their pretty leaves formed a perfect bower of verdure before the little window.

There were also, far down among the leaves, a

multitude of pretty blue flowers. At first those flowers looked very much like little balls of green satin. But little by little, thanks to the rays of sunlight which beamed upon them, every day they grew; and one morning when Lilla and her mamma opened the window, they found their convolvulus covered with beautiful bell-like flowers!

Those flowers were perfectly charming, they were of all colours, white, and pink, and blue, and the leaves of those flowers were as soft and fine as velvet. Their colours were so rich and so beautifully blended that the very sight of them filled the child's heart with a rapture she could not express.

It was the sun that had made all those lovely flowers bloom, and now it shone upon them as if it took pleasure in smiling on its work. And the flowers themselves turned gracefully round on their flexible stalks, in order to catch the sun's rays, and thank them for being so kind.

The day was passed in ceaseless admiration, the mother and child could talk of nothing but their flowers. Every now and then their eyes would wander from their seam to the window; then the mother and daughter looked at each other with a smile which fully expressed all their pleasure.

But this happy day came to an end like all others. Evening closed in, and Lilla perceived that all the flowers of the convolvulus, which had opened themselves so gaily in the morning, now closed their bells one after the other.

The bewildered little girl looked up to the heavens to seek for the sun, but there was no longer any sun, —it had disappeared !

“ O mamma ! ” cried the child, “ there is no more sun, and look how our poor flowers are fading ! Ah ! our beautiful flowers ! the sun has gone, and our flowers are dead ! ”

“ Never mind, my child,” said the mother, “ the sun is only gone for a little while, and our flowers are not dead. The sun is now shining upon other flowers and making them grow, and ours are only gone to sleep till he comes back. To-morrow morning we shall see the sun again, and then our dear flowers will bloom as sweetly as ever.”

The next morning the sun rose brightly, and the flowers opened their bells again, and were more numerous and lovely than on the first day. Then Lilla was quite happy and comforted.

“ You see, my child,” said the mother, taking her on her knee and stroking her golden head, “ the sun

is the emblem of God. Sometimes it seems to be far from us, but it always returns and never leaves us in darkness and despair. And if it is certain that the sun brings daylight to chase away the night, it is also certain that God will wipe away all our tears and give us joy instead of sorrow. Let us work then, Lilla, work and endure with patience whatever is sent to us, and let us trust in God as the flowers trust in the sun, for, of all our hopes of happiness, that alone is a sure one, and will never be deceived."





XII.

THE POTATO-PLANT.

WHOMO does not like potatoes? I think every one likes potatoes, and they are quite right, for they are a healthy, nourishing food, which agrees with almost every one, and accommodates itself to every purse.

I am sure, my little readers, you all know the plant which produces the potato? You know that this plant, which grows to about a foot in height, produces a little star-like flower, sometimes lilac, sometimes white, to which succeeds a little green berry, in which you will find the seed enclosed. You also know that this fruit is not for eating, and that the potato, the part which we use for food, grows far down in the

earth, at the very foot of the plant, and attached to the roots.

You will know all that if you have ever seen the plant, or if you are attentive to your lessons. But there are very many children, less fortunate than you, who are quite ignorant of those simple things. Listen, then, to the story which I am going to tell you.

Mr Grant had three children ; the eldest was called Harry, the second Frank, and the third Rose.

One day this gentleman bought a field, and he said to his three children,—

“I am going to divide this field among you, and I will give you each a square, so that you may cultivate whatever you like in it.”

Harry, who liked red, planted roses in his ; Frank, who liked yellow best, filled his with marigolds and buttercups ; and little Rose, who loved white, had nothing but daisies.

But papa had his little ones to feed, and so he planted his with potatoes.

When summer had come, roses, buttercups, and daisies flourished and bloomed so well that the little children were charmed with their brilliant gardens.

The potatoes bloomed also, but their modest

flowers, half concealed under their dark leaves, seemed quite pale and faded beside their gay neighbours.

“Why has our father, who is so wise, planted that sombre-looking flower,” said the children to each other. “How much prettier the field would be if it was filled with daisies, or buttercups, or roses!”

The summer passed, and the flowers faded, papa’s potatoes as well as the children’s pretty flowers. All the withered stalks lay on the ground, and there was nothing for the children to gather but dry leaves.

But papa brought a band of workers into his field. With iron hoes they opened the furrows, and drew from their midst potatoes of excellent quality.

They put those potatoes into large bags, which they laid upon waggons, and there were so many of them that it was easy to see the children would have plenty to eat all the year.

And the children, who were very fond of potatoes, no longer thought of blaming their father; instead of that, they repented of their own folly, and had the courage to confess that they were in fault.

“Father,” they said, “forgive us, for we did not choose well. We thought ourselves wiser than you. We thought your flowers far less beautiful than our

own, and we despised those poor stalks which we did not know had potatoes at their roots."

"My dear children," replied the father, "I forgive you with all my heart, but only on one condition, and it is this, that you remember all your life what has just happened, and," he added, with great seriousness, "that you never again commit the same fault."

"Oh, no, papa, we will never do it again," replied the children, somewhat surprised at the grave tone in which their father spoke to them. "We can never commit the same fault again, for now we know potatoes."

"You do not know them all, my dear children," replied the father. "The world, you see, is like a field, in which all sorts of plants are growing. There are some people who shine as brilliantly as the beautiful flowers you have cultivated, and there are others who live and die humble and despised, like my useful potatoes."

"And the world judges as you have judged. It makes a great deal of some, and despises and scorns others: oh, imitate it no longer, my children! Love beauty since it charms the eye; but honour virtue which does good in silence. Seek it, imitate it, for when the harvest time is come, and death the great

reaper will cut us down, what fruit will God find in us? In the brilliant flowers there will be nothing but a bunch of withered stalks, and in the humble potato plants a mine of wealth!"





XIII.

NOAH'S ARK.

ALONG time, dear children, after the death of Adam and Eve, mankind forgot God and became very wicked. They no longer fulfilled the duties that had been given them to do, for God never intended us to be idle, they did not love each other, they never prayed, they committed all sorts of iniquity. God seeing their wickedness, resolved to punish them; but there was one good and virtuous family among them who still remained faithful to God, and so He did not wish to punish them with the others: for God is just, and He never confounds those who do well with those who do evil.

The father of this family was called Noah ; he was a Patriarch, that is to say, "chief of a tribe," for in those days there were no kings, it was the father who exercised power over his family and servants, and the word Patriarch signifies, "government of a father."

So God told Noah to build a large house of wood, in the form of a boat, very close and well lined with pitch inside and out.

Pitch is a kind of thick black stuff, which fills the smallest holes in the wood upon which it is spread, so that no water can penetrate through it. And though Noah had perhaps never made use of this before, he believed in God and did as he was told.

The work which God had given Noah to do was both long and fatiguing, but Noah immediately set himself to execute it. He knew that all God's commandments are wise, and that we always do right in obeying them. Then Noah cut down trees, sawed planks of wood, and constructed, as God had commanded him, the building which was called Noah's Ark ; and when the Ark was finished, God told Noah to go into it with his wife, their children, and two of every kind of beast and bird upon the earth. He also told Noah to take into the Ark sufficient food to

serve him and his family, as well as all the animals that were with him for a certain time. Noah did all that God commanded him, and as soon as they were all shut up in the Ark, a heavy rain began to fall which covered the whole earth with water. Very soon the small streams became rivers, then seas, and little by little the waters rose till they covered the trees, then even the tops of the highest mountains, so that every living thing upon the earth was drowned. The sinful, wicked men whom God wished to punish were all drowned, and only the Ark,—the Ark made of wood and lined with pitch, floated like a great ship, and always remained on the surface of the waters which raised it along with them.

This great and destructive rain was called the Deluge. It fell incessantly for forty days and forty nights ; then God made it stop, and raised a great wind, which, sweeping along the mass of waters, gradually dispersed them, and the Ark descended little by little.

Meanwhile, Noah, not being able to see whether the earth was dry or not, because the windows of the Ark were closed, opened one of them and sent forth a raven. Ravens are birds of prey ; they feed upon dead bodies and carcases ; and as this raven did not

return to the Ark, Noah concluded that it must have found something to eat, floating upon the waters. Seven days after, he opened the window again, and sent forth a dove. A dove is a kind of pigeon, very much more gentle and delicate than ravens. The doves' feet are tinged with a pale rose-pink, and are very clean.

The dove had not been gone long from the Ark before it returned. Noah understood from that that the earth was still covered with the waters, and that it had found nowhere to rest.]

So Noah waited seven days longer. After that time, he sent forth the dove again, and this time it returned, bearing in its mouth a little branch of a tree. It was an olive branch, and Noah understood from that that the waters must have greatly abated since the trees were again visible. He thought it wise, however, to wait other seven days. Then he opened the Ark, and all the men, women, and children, and the animals, were allowed to go out of it.

The earth was nearly dry again. The sun shone, and the plants were beginning to reappear. The animals betook themselves to the country, and the birds flew into the air. How happy they must have

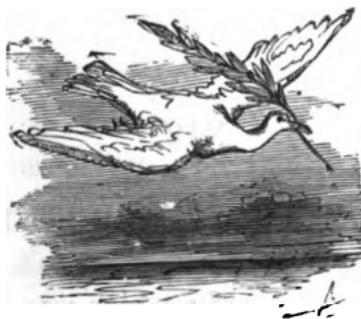
been to be saved from this great destruction ! I leave you to imagine how grateful Noah and his family were towards God !

Noah immediately erected an altar in remembrance of the divine protection ; and God caused a beautiful rainbow to appear in the heavens, as a testimony that He would preserve this protection to Noah, and his children, and to all mankind that should come after them, if they remained faithful to His commandments.

Yes, Noah was grateful to God for having told him to build the Ark, for he was always ready and happy to obey God. If he had not been obedient, and if he had said, "This work is too difficult for me, I will not do it ;" or, "I have plenty time, I will commence it soon ;" or, if he had not had perseverance, and, after beginning the Ark, he had grown tired of his work, and left it without finishing it, what would have become of him ? The deluge would have come, and Noah, his wife, and their children, having no ark to flee to for safety, would have been drowned, like the rest of mankind.

See then, dear children, that you fulfil all your undertakings with courage and fortitude, and accomplish all your duties perseveringly and patiently.

You will certainly reap the reward ; and God will bless you and protect you, as He blessed and protected Noah and his family.





XIV.

THE BOY AND THE BUTTERFLY.

ONE day a butterfly, which was fluttering gaily through the air, alighted on a flower. A little boy saw it, and thinking it very pretty, he thought he would like to try and catch it. He chased it for a while, but each time the child came near the butterfly, it rose into the air far beyond his reach.

“Oh, leave it, dear child,” said the mother, “leave the pretty butterfly, and be content to see it flying

about happy and free ; for if you touch it, it will lose its beauty, and so your pleasure will be gone."

The little boy was obedient—he did not chase the butterfly any more. He did what was much better : he went to a corner of the garden, and gathered a branch of honeysuckle, covered with fresh and fragrant flowers. Then he returned, and slipped quietly near the butterfly, holding the branch quite steady in his little hand. Very soon the butterfly alighted upon the honeysuckle, and the little boy, quite enraptured, could see it and examine it at his ease.

It was a pretty yellow butterfly, with wings soft as velvet, enamelled with red and black spots which looked like jewels. It had four wings, and those wings were so light that their motion, though very rapid, made not the slightest sound. During its flight, the butterfly kept its feet folded up, but as soon as it alighted, the little boy could count three on each side. Then he saw it project a small trunk from its mouth, fine as silk, which it thrust gently into the heart of the flowers, and extracted its food without destroying anything.

But butterflies cannot remain long in the same place. In a few moments the yellow butterfly left the branch of honeysuckle which the boy held so

patiently in his hand, and flew here and there, and passed from one flower to the other so swiftly that its weight did not shake them in the least.

The little boy could not draw himself away from this charming sight. He could not turn his eyes away for a moment, lest the butterfly should fly off. The earnest desire to possess it made him forget his mother's wise advice, and when the butterfly, without the least misgiving of danger, was peacefully sipping the nectar from a rose, the child seized it! Then he opened his hand—but, alas! what had become of the charming insect? A soft glittering powder covered the boy's fingers, and the poor butterfly, crushed and trembling, lay with its pretty wings torn to pieces.

The child was bewildered and surprised at this sad spectacle, and very soon great tears stood in his round blue eyes. At last he could bear his grief no longer, and he ran to hide it in his mother's breast.

His mother, seeing him so sorry and repentant for the evil he had done, did not scold her child, but comforted him as well as she could.

“My son,” she said, “learn for the future to be satisfied with the pleasures which God has given you, and never forget that, in trying to seize what does not

belong to you, you deprive yourselves and others of a pleasure which cannot be recalled, by rendering it useless, as you have just done this poor butterfly."





XV.

THE PEACH-STONE.

ROBERT GREY was a monitor or teacher in a school, and he deserved his position, for he had many good qualities.

He managed his little flock of pupils wonderfully.

He was zealous, eager to instruct, full of love of order and discipline, and showed a good example in almost everything.

But he had one great defect for a teacher !

He was impatient and rough with those of his little pupils who could not immediately understand the lessons and explanations he gave them.

Then he would shake them, mark them with bad points, or send them back to their lesson.

And this impatience was neither reasonable nor just ; for when a pupil does not understand anything, it is the teacher's business to explain it to him.

But if, instead of that, he repels the pupil, the child learns nothing, and has a bad opinion of his teacher, because he feels he is unjust.

So Robert, in spite of all his good qualities, was not a perfect teacher. Without gentleness and patience one can never hope to become that.

One day, when Robert had been more than usually rough, the master called him as he was about to depart.

“ Robert, my friend,” said he, “ you spoil all your good qualities by your roughness towards your little pupils, and you vex me very much.”

"But, sir," replied Robert, "those stupid children can understand nothing; their heads are as hard as peach-stones."

"Peach-stones are not always hard, sir," said the master, bending a severe look upon Robert; "God knows how to soften them like everything else."

Robert flushed, and dared not reply; he bade the master good-bye, and went away to reflect upon his words.

All at once he perceived a peach-stone lying in his path, and as it was on this very subject that his thoughts were pondering, and that had been the cause of his rebuke, he gave it a great blow with his foot, and was about to kick it into the river, when he was interrupted by a passer-by.

"Do not throw it away, sir," said a little old woman, with an old-fashioned curtsey, "for though you cannot see it, there is a whole tree inside of that stone, leaves, and flowers, and everything."

Robert turned towards the old woman, and looked at her, without exactly comprehending what she was saying.

I don't know that he thought this stone was different from any other, or that it enclosed a tree all

ready made, but he lifted it up, and tried to break it with his teeth. Vain effort! He tried it over and over again, but he could make nothing of it.

Then he took his knife and tried to open it like a nut, but it was impossible. He struck it again with his boot, but the peach-stone was harder than the boot, and it was the latter which threatened to give way.

Robert, with his accustomed violence, became angry.

He wished, at all costs, to see inside of this peach-stone, but the stone did not wish to let Robert in, because he could not open it in the proper way.

“Sir,” said the little old woman, “take it home with you, and plant it in a little corner of ground, water it every little while, and see that it has plenty air and light, and some fine day that hard piece of wood, which resists all your efforts to force it, will gently open, and give you itself what you have been trying all this while to snatch from it.”

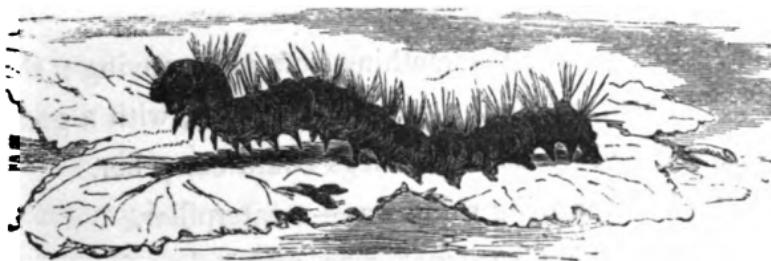
Then the teacher began to think of his little pupils, whose heads he thought so very hard and impenetrable.

“What is required to soften this peach-stone?” he asked.

"Only time and patience," answered the old woman.

Then Robert understood what his master had said, and that those were the very qualities necessary to him in his daily work of instruction.





XVI.

LUCY AND THE CATERPILLAR.

LUCY VERNON went once every week to spend the day with her grandmother. There was a beautiful large garden round the house, where the little girl romped and played to her heart's content, while she enjoyed the fragrance of the sweet flowers around her.

She never destroyed anything, because she knew that would be naughty. One day she observed a very tempting ripe peach on a small tree ; this lovely peach was yellow, and pink, and soft as velvet ; it looked delicious, and Lucy immediately thought how much her grandmother would like it ; and, anxious to present the beautiful fruit to her, she stretched out her hand to pluck it ; but below the peach her little

fingers came upon something soft and moving ; she looked at it, threw the peach away, and, with a great cry, she fled as fast as her legs could carry her.

This soft moving thing was—a caterpillar.

John, the old gardener, who was only a few yards off, nailing up some untidy branches, hastened towards the little girl, and anxiously inquired what had happened.

But Lucy, who was still trembling with fear, could only answer by pointing with her finger to the peach lying on the ground, to which the caterpillar still clung.

“What !” exclaimed old John. “Is it this poor little caterpillar which has made you cry like that ? How can such an innocent little beast make you so frightened, my child ?”

“Oh, it is so ugly !” replied Lucy, with a face of disgust.

“Not at all,” said the gardener ; “on the contrary, there are some of them very pretty. See now,” added he, leading the child gently towards the peach, and taking both the fruit and the insect into his hand,—“see, my child, how beautifully this caterpillar is dressed. One would think it was clothed in brown velvet, with golden-coloured ribbons, and a double

necklace of pearls. It is God alone who has made it so beautiful."

"Is that true, John?—let me see!" said Lucy, stretching forward her neck, but keeping herself well out of the way, and concealing her hands behind her back.

Then, reassured by the gardener's presence, and also by a little reflection, she closely examined the caterpillar, which was still creeping over the peach.

"Oh, look, John, it is going to eat my grandmother's peach!"

"Not at all, my child; caterpillars do not eat fruit, but they eat leaves, buds, and flowers, and often destroy the trees very much."

"Then you see, John, they are very wicked."

"No, my child; to be wicked is to wish to do evil, even when it is not in our power. But caterpillars have no evil intentions; they eat, like us, because they are created to live; and, like us, they choose what is most agreeable to them. Accordingly, as their existence would interfere with our pleasure, by depriving us of fruit, which they prevent from growing, we destroy them because we are stronger than they. You see, my child, if there was any wickedness here, it would not be on the part of the caterpillars."

“Would it be us?” asked Lucy.

“We do not think ourselves any more wicked for that,” replied the gardener. “We must live, as well as the caterpillars; and, like them, we apply ourselves diligently to make the most of what God has given us.”

“Are caterpillars diligent, too?” asked Lucy.

“God has taught every creature, from the greatest to the most insignificant, all that it needs to know to accomplish its destiny. Without the instinct he has given them, how would they know what to do?”

“What do caterpillars do, then?”

“Do you not know?”

“No,” said Lucy, shaking her head.

“First of all, they work.”

“For their children?”

“No, caterpillars have no young ones.”

“Why do they need to work, then, John?”

“For their second life.”

At those words, Lucy raised her large eyes to the gardener’s face, and looked at him with astonishment. She had never heard of another life than that belonging to our immortal souls, and that must be so very far distant from a caterpillar.

“You see, my child, gardener though I be, I can-

not help loving those poor caterpillars, though they vex me sadly by the destruction they cause. But their poor despised life is very touching. Only think of those poor little beasts being deprived of every pleasure in this world. As I have told you, they have neither house nor family, not even a little nest to shelter them at night. They come in the beginning of spring, on to the almost naked branches. They creep there, and cling to them to try and get some meagre nourishment. Sadly encumbered by their short legs, which compel them to remain fast by the branches on which they were born, they know neither the beauty of the flowers nor the softness of the air, nor how delightful it is to wander freely through it. They inspire almost every one with the aversion and disgust which you have just displayed; but nothing discourages them, or turns them from their task. They pass through this life, poor little beasts, as if they understood from the first that it could only last a very little while. They eat the leaves and buds incessantly; but it is to collect together materials for their work, just as you see my old wife filling her mesh with thread before she begins to net. Then, when the caterpillars have collected sufficient, they stop eating, and commence to spin."

“To spin stockings and things, like your wife?” asked Lucy.

“Oh no, little one,” replied old John, laughing; “they spin themselves a little house. First of all, they wisely choose a quiet spot, where they will neither be disturbed while at their work, nor exposed after it is finished. They suspend themselves from the branch of a tree, or take refuge in a hole in the wall. Then they gradually spin out their thread, and make a little covering so closely round them that you cannot even catch a glimpse of the worker inside. Then it undergoes a change. It is no longer a caterpillar, but a chrysalis, as it is called. A thing which has neither head, nor feet, nor anything else, but which still moves when it is touched. One would never imagine it to be a beast, or rather an insect. It looks more like a seed, or a fruit of some kind; but at any rate it is not pretty.”

“And is this their reward for having worked so hard?” asked the little girl.

“Oh no! it is not dead yet; that sleep is only a kind of preparation for their second existence. When the cold, and snow, and bad weather are all gone, and the sun shines and makes everything on the earth full of life, the chrysalis opens, and the

former caterpillar spreads out its wings and flies into the air, a brilliant butterfly.

“ It is then that they are rewarded for all their patience and industry. Formerly, the poor little beast could do nothing but creep slowly over the leaves ; now, it flies from one flower to another, and sips the honey as it goes. It feeds itself on their fragrance, and drinks the dewdrops from the rose. The caterpillar, you see, has to undergo much toil, and solitude, and fatigue before it becomes a butterfly ; but now it can wander through the most beautiful gardens and verdant meadows. It flutters through the air with a crowd of happy friends, light and joyous as itself. Every eye looks upon it as one of spring’s greatest charms. It is admired and envied by those who used to despise it. And, as if every happiness was showered upon it, to make up for its former want and hardships, it now has, under its new form, a family of little ones.”

“ Are little butterflies the children of the big ones, then ? ” asked Lucy.

“ No, my child,” replied kind old John. “ Large, and small, white, yellow, and black butterflies, are all so many different kinds, which live a longer or shorter time, and take more or less time to hatch.

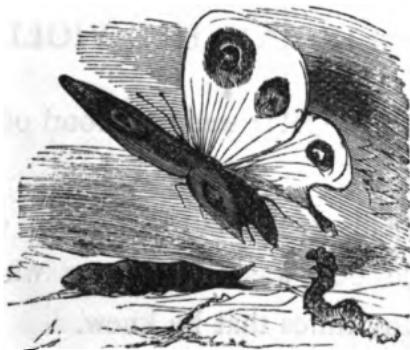
The butterflies' children are little eggs, which their mothers lay carefully on the barks of trees and bushes, and which, after some little time, turn into caterpillars. These little caterpillars have to undergo the very same process as their parents ; and if, in their turn, they accomplish their work well, they will also be transformed and rewarded in the same manner."

" You are quite right to love the poor little caterpillars, John," said the child, " for I see they are very industrious little things. Give me that one, and let me look at it, please."

And Lucy resolutely took the peach and the caterpillar from the hands of the old gardener, and set herself to watch it in silence.

" It is strange," she said, presently, " that what you have just told me about the caterpillar is very like a story of our own lives which mamma told me. I know quite well that we are people, and that caterpillars are animals, and have no soul like us,—that we will live in another world, and that they die on earth. But mamma told me that here there was nothing but work for us, then death ; and then, if we have been good, we will turn into beautiful angels, and that is so like the caterpillar ! "

“Yes, my child, so it is,” replied the gardener ;
“and if we do our work well, there is an eternal
reward in store for us.”





XVII.

WILLIE AND THE VIOLIN.

MR CLIFFORD was very fond of playing the violin.

This gentleman had a son called Willie, and the little boy was very happy when his papa played him any tunes that he knew.

Then Willie would sing, and his father accompanied the little voice very gently on the violin. It was very pretty music, and did not seem at all difficult.

Mr Clifford had only to place the violin on his shoulder, take hold of the instrument with his left hand, and touch the cords one after another with his fingers. Then the right hand held the bowstring, which glided over the wires, and the violin played



all that was wanted ! That seemed so simple and so easy to do, that little Willie wished to play too.

“ Give it to me, please, papa, and let me play,” said the boy.

The father gave Willie his violin, and the little boy placed it very adroitly on his shoulder, as he had seen his father do, then he took the bow in his left hand, and began to play !

But what a frightful noise he made ! Instead of the beautiful tunes it usually played, the violin did nothing but howl and shriek ! It sounded so horrible that the little boy, quite frightened, quickly gave back the instrument to his papa.

“ But, papa, what do you do to make it play such pretty tunes ? ” asked Willie.

“ It is very simple, my son,” replied the father ; “ you have only to learn to play it ! ”

MORAL.

Learn to refresh your mind with refined pleasures which will ennable it, so that you may not yield to the temptation of those gross pleasures which would only harden and degrade it.



XVIII.

THE BOUQUET OF VIOLETS.

ANNA one day went out to walk with her mamma.

It was in the month of April. Spring had come, and brought pretty green leaves to the trees, and everything was looking very bright and beautiful.

Anna lived in London ; but there are beautiful parks for walking in there, and she was now going

to one of them with her mamma. At the entrance-gate stood a poor old woman, selling little bouquets of violets. She offered her pretty merchandise to every passer-by, and kept repeating :

“ Fresh violets ! only twopence a bunch ; and they smell so sweetly.”

Several gentlemen bought them to put in their button-holes, but the greater number passed by without even casting a glance at the pretty flowers ; and the poor woman repeated her cry in vain.

“ Mamma,” said Anna, “ will you buy me a bouquet ? ”

“ Certainly, my child,” replied the mother, and she immediately took two pennies from her purse, and gave them to the old woman, who, in exchange, placed a very pretty bouquet in the little girl’s hand.

But Anna had not had it in her possession for a few minutes before she began to destroy it, by plucking off the leaves and petals, and crushing them in her hand as if they had been daisies out of the field. Her mamma was about to correct her, but the old woman was quicker than she.

“ Ah, little miss, what are you doing ? ” cried she. “ Why are you tearing my poor flowers to pieces ? ”

“They are mine now, because I bought them from you,” replied the little girl.

“True enough,” said the old woman; “you have paid your money for the flowers, and you think no more of them than of the pennies you gave me for them. But I, miss—I love them, because of all the flowers God has created, there are none more beautiful than the violet. And if you knew those simple flowers as well as I do, like me you would also love them, and you would not destroy them.”

“But I know violets quite well,” replied the child, quite surprised, and a little offended too, perhaps. “I know that violets are not roses, or daisies, or any other flower, but violets !”

“Oh, I daresay, miss, you know their colour, and form, and leaves, and that pleases you; but their character and qualities, so to speak, you know nothing about, and that is the reason you do not love them.”

“I did not know flowers had any character—have they ?” asked Anna, turning to her mother.

“Listen, my daughter, to what this good woman says,” replied the mother. “She knows all about the violets, and will tell you their history.”

“ Will you tell me all about the violets ? ” asked Anna, of the old woman.

“ With pleasure, miss ; for one never wearies speaking of what they love.

“ First of all, my child, breathe the sweet perfume which my favourite flowers send forth. There is, indeed, nothing more sweet or more agreeable than this perfume.

“ Ah, well ! notwithstanding all their charms, violets are not the least proud. Instead of being vain, and wishing to display themselves, they hide as much as they can.

“ Instead of showing themselves off to attract admiration, like the roses, which need plenty of sun and light, the dear little violets grow quietly in the shade, in silent woods and deserted lanes.

“ They hide under their leaves, and keep each other company ; for they always grow in clusters, and they ask nothing more.

“ The morning dew, and a ray from the rising sun, peeping through the trees, is all that those modest flowers require.

“ I know very well where they like to grow, and can feel their perfume in the air a long way off ; for their fragrance betrays their hiding-place before the

eye can see them, and this modesty lends them a new charm.

“When we have enjoyed all the perfume this sweet flower can give, they are collected, and the leaves are distilled and preserved. Perfumers mix this scent in the pomade which perfumes your hair; and they make from it also scent for your handkerchiefs. Every one likes the sweet perfume of the violet, for it is as harmless as it is sweet.

“So when this poor little flower is faded, and withered, and torn—for, alas! everything must come to an end—the joy of giving pleasure still remains to it. When it has lost all its beauty and freshness, it is like those good, kind people who, though the brightness of youth is passed, still preserve the lasting beauty of a kind heart !”

“It is quite true, I know,” said Anna, who had been listening very attentively; “but I tore my pretty bouquet without ever thinking of all that.”

And Anna stood quietly looking with regret at the remains of the violets scattered on the ground.

“My child,” continued the old woman, who saw how sorry and repentant Anna was, “here is another bouquet of violets for you. Accept them from me. I think you will take better care of them now. But,

above all, my child, never again do anything without thinking!"





XIX.

THE TWO CATS.



HIS pretty white cat lived in a large country house, where it passed all its time in perfect idleness.

It was one of those beautiful Angora cats which have such long soft fur, that in passing your hand over, you would think it was velvet. It was pure white, without a single mark, and it was large and fat and lazy ; in short, it was a magnificent cat.

Her mistress loved her very much, and she was fed, and washed, and cared for by the servants ; so that this cat had no need to provide for its own wants, and became very lazy and idle.

It had only to lick its soft paws, stretch itself on the carpet or rug, and lie there purring for hours

together, with its half-closed eyes watching the hand that caressed it.

One autumn evening the Angora, tired of sleeping,—for rest tires one more than work when we have too much of it—jumped from its soft cushion, stretched itself, and walked slowly out towards the park of the castle.

This beautiful park was full of tall trees,—oaks, elms, and limes,—between which there had been wide paths left, so that one might enjoy walking in the shade. One of those paths led to the farm, which could be discerned in the distance.

The Angora cat, as you may fancy, had never taken the trouble to go there. At the farm the feeding was very plain, everybody worked and toiled, and only rested when they were really tired: what would have become of the Angora there?

However, out of curiosity,—for idleness causes weariness, and weariness causes curiosity,—the cat determined to explore the farm. It walked through the beautiful pathway, taking good care to keep on the turf which grew on its borders, for fear of soiling its delicate feet in the dust.

So it went slowly along, exhibiting all the indifference of a cat that is fairly wearied and worn out,

when suddenly another cat sprang out from behind a cluster of bramble bushes, and stood face to face in the path with the beautiful Angora.

The Angora leapt back with fear, for it had not expected such an abrupt meeting. Then it curled up its back, opened its eyes to their full extent, and gradually retreated.

The other cat, on the contrary, seemed quite charmed to meet with a companion. It advanced towards the Angora with a mew, as much as to say, "We do not know each other, but we belong to the same family ; so let us be friends."

The Angora perceiving its kindly intentions, doubtless understood that the new comer wished to do no evil, for it seemed somewhat reassured, and sat examining the other in silence.

It was not a pretty cat by any means. It was neither fat nor white ; it was thin, and tall, and gray. Its tail was short, and its legs were so long that it seemed to be nothing but legs. One could easily guess at first sight that it never received any nourishment from its master's table, but that it gained all its food by its own exertions.

In short, it was not an ornamental cat, like the Angora, but a useful member of society.

Its humble condition, however, did not prevent it being clean and in good health; on the contrary, its tail and feet were smooth and shining. It was so much accustomed to exercise that it might have defied all the squirrels and levrets in the neighbourhood at leaping and running.

But the Angora appeared to scorn this useful, playful cat. I do not know if cats can really indulge in pride, but I almost think so, from the condescending manner in which it looked at its new friend. It wished to give no reply to its gentle advances, but turning round, and taking good care to avoid touching the gray cat, it slowly returned home, dragging its long tail over the grass; then, quickening its steps, it began to run as if it was afraid of being pursued by its troublesome acquaintance.

But it did not need to trouble itself, for no one ever thought of giving it chase. The gray cat, quietly seated on the grass, watched its hasty retreat, without being able to understand the cause of its scorn.

In reality, this scorn, or pride, if it was so, did not arise from any motive. The gray cat was of the same race as the Angora. The one had come into the world white, the other gray; but there was no merit attached to either one colour or the other. The one

was descended from a race of long-tailed cats, which originally inhabited Angora, in Asia ; the other, from a short-tailed race, which have always lived in Europe ; but the difference was the same to both of them, and whatever the parents, country, colour, or profession, of the two cats might be, still they were both cats.

After such hurried exercise, the white cat arrived in the drawing-room quite out of breath, and again stretched itself on its soft cushion. Meanwhile the gray cat, hearing a rustling noise in the bushes beside it, advanced stealthily, with eyes and ears wide open, and commenced its work,—the midnight chase.



CHAPTER II.

THREE months had passed since the cats first met, and now winter had come, the trees had lost all their pretty green leaves, the wind whistled and howled through their bare branches, and for two days the snow had been falling and covering the whole earth.

It was bitterly cold. The gray cat was sheltered in the granary of the farm, for there was no longer anything to hunt in the fields. But there was more than enough of work for it in the granary, where the fruits of the harvest—hay, corn, &c.—were stowed away. Rats and mice are very fond of those things, and they would very soon have been devoured and destroyed if pussy had not been so active and vigilant.

Pussy, a little wearied with not getting out, leapt from the straw where it was lying crouched, and approached the granary door. This door opened into the fields, and below it was a little hole to admit the passage of cats.

So pussy advanced to the door, and looked through this hole, from which it could see the castle and the solitary park in the distance. Then, at the foot of a

tree, among the beautiful snow, so pure and white, it distinguished another object, not quite so white, but living and moving.

Pussy quickly trotted down the stairs, and over the snow it went, fearing neither cold nor anything else.

It very soon reached this object. Alas ! it was a poor cat, lying cold and benumbed in the snow. Its eyes were closed, and it looked so weak and helpless that it seemed to be nearly dead.

When this cat heard pussy approaching, it was frightened, and tried to rise and run away. But it had not strength enough, and fell back helpless among the snow.

The kind pussy gently approached its sick friend ; then, as if it had recognised her, it all at once uttered a very tender and compassionate mew, and seated itself on the snow beside the poor cat.

The latter raised its head languidly, and stared for a moment at the gray pussy, then replied with a mew, in a very sad voice indeed.

Who would have thought that this poor forsaken cat, dying with cold and hunger, was the beautiful Angora which formerly slept on velvet cushions, and was waited upon by a servant !—this companion, this favourite toy of the mistress of the castle !

The two cats remained thus for some time opposite to each other, motionless and silent, but watching one another, and every now and then uttering low cries.

What they were saying to each other, I cannot tell. What could they be speaking about? Was the Angora explaining its misfortunes to the gray cat? It is quite possible; but I cannot tell, for no one knows by what language it has pleased God to make animals understand each other.

But I do know the story of the white cat's misfortunes, and I shall tell it to you.

Alas! it is only what happens very often. The seasons change, and fortune changes too. Winter came, the mistress of the castle returned to town, and the Angora was forgotten and left behind in the country. It had no longer any servant to prepare its food, and at last, pressed by hunger, it decided to go out, at all hazards, and seek some food.

Weak and benumbed by cold and hunger, it did not know where to go, when the farmer's wife passed by. She was a good, kind woman, and, pitying the poor cat, she took it in her arms, carried it home, and placed it by the side of the fire to warm it.

“Why have you brought that cat here?” asked

the farmer of his wife. "Is not our own brave pussy enough to defend us from the rats and mice?"

"It is true enough; but this one seemed so helpless and unfortunate, I could not help pitying it."

"After all, wife, you have done well," replied her husband. "We should help all that are suffering, whether man or beast;" and the Angora was allowed to remain in its corner by the fire.

It ought to have been very happy to be so well cared for, but it neither seemed pleased nor contented.

It was hungry; the farmer's wife offered it some soup; but it was potato soup, and it would not taste it; it was accustomed to more delicate fare.

As soon as its deliverer had gone out, the cat slipped into the cupboard, and, like a thief, drank the milk which had been laid past for tea.

It was still busy with this when the farmer's wife returned; and when she saw what had been done, she chased it from the house, as it deserved.

Then it had nowhere to go, and wandered in the fields, sleeping on the cold hard ground, and feeding itself on anything it could get hold of. Just at the time the snow began to fall its resources failed; it absolutely could find nothing to eat, and was

reduced to dying of hunger at the foot of the tree where the gray cat had just observed it.

What misfortunes and hardships, and what a severe lesson for the Angora ! If it had been able to reflect, it would doubtless have come to the conclusion that there is nothing more deceitful than fortune, and nothing more dangerous than idleness.

I honestly believe that the gray cat was happier in its useful, active life at the farm than the white Angora in the castle.

The white cat had been fed only by the good pleasure of its mistress, whilst the gray cat supported itself by its own honest exertions. The welfare of the white cat depended entirely upon the generosity of those who had reared it in luxury ; whereas that of the gray cat depended on its industry, activity, and the services which it rendered at the farm.

Thus, as if it fully appreciated the happiness of freedom, pussy invited the Angora to come and share its life, live with it in the granary, sleep on the straw, learn to hunt rats and mice, and live sociably and in good fellowship with its friends.

The gray cat then rose, and led the Angora towards the farm. It mounted the stairs, but the Angora was so weak that it had no little difficulty in following

its agile guide. At last they reached the hole, and entered the granary.

There the Angora was sheltered from the cold, wind, and snow. Then, gradually, after watching the gray cat attentively, it learned to hunt, and could very soon appease its hunger. When it happened to secure a prize, the kind gray pussy was never jealous ; it only seemed to make it happier.

And so the two cats lived together a long time in peace and happiness ; for the first principle of true happiness is not in wealth and luxury, but in peace, love, and industry.





XX.

LAURA'S LESSON.



AURA was a little girl of seven years old. This little girl had no mother, but she had a sister called Emily, who was as gentle and kind as a mother to little Laura, and a very wise teacher.

Emily was only sixteen when she became her young sister's mother and teacher, and she was no more learned than girls generally are at that age. But she knew more than Laura, and so she was able to help her.

Emily was watchful and reflective: she observed everything around her, and drew her own conclusions.

Above all, she had learned the value of time : she had watched a little plant grow up in a flower-pot at her window, and a house building in the street opposite to her. Every day the plant grew a little, and every day the masons raised the walls of the house higher and higher. But on some days, Sunday for instance, the masons were not at work, and so that was a lost day so far as the house was concerned ; the walls were no higher, but the little plant, to which every day was the same, grew without any interruption.

So Emily perceived that in order to make a house, a flower, or anything else, much time, patience, and labour were necessary. And as we have all many things to do, and many duties to perform, she said to herself—

“ We ought to divide the day very equally amongst all our duties, so that none of our time may be lost. Time is precious, and soon flies past, whether it be spent in work or idleness. One hour well or badly employed slips away, another follows, and so evening succeeds to morning and morning to evening, and what we call to-day will very soon be gone, never to return.”

So Emily laid down rules for every hour, for her

and her little sister to follow. They rose every morning at six o'clock, they dressed, and said their prayers, and by seven they were ready for their work. Emily took her sewing, while Laura busied herself with her lessons.

Their meals were punctually at the same hour every day, but their studies and recreations were varied. When evening came, the sisters generally found they had got through a good amount of work, learnt many things, and, besides all that, had been very happy.

There was one recreation which the sisters delighted in beyond all others, and this was the cultivation of flowers. I spoke to you of the little plant which had first taught Emily the value of time ; well, it had grown, its leaves had spread out, little buds had formed, and beautiful flowers had burst from them, which sent forth a delicious fragrance —it was a little rose-tree.

Emily loved her rose-bush so much that she began to think of making a little garden in a corner of the yard behind the house. Laura was delighted with this proposal, and helped her sister to plant little beds of violets and daisies in it.

But this little garden needed to be well cared for,
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and this was the recreation which the sisters loved so much.

Every evening, after they had finished their allotted task of sewing or embroidery, learnt and understood their lessons for next day, and exactly at the fixed hour, they went to the little garden with a small basket and watering-pan. First of all, any weeds that were hiding beneath the flowers were removed ; then they rained the pure water down upon the plants, raised the stones, and took away any insects or worms that were likely to destroy the flowers. So everything grew luxuriantly. The rose-tree above all. It soon became quite magnificent, and towered so high above all the other plants that it looked as if it were sovereign of the garden.

Emily became more and more attached to it every day, she had seen it so little once ! And then, by teaching her the value of time, it had given her a very precious lesson. She was very grateful to it, and would not have exchanged nor sold it for anything in the world.

One day, Mr Grant, the father of those two girls, received a letter from his sister-in-law, saying that her son Ralph had been very ill ; he was much better now, and almost convalescent, but he wearied very

much, and she asked if Emily would be kind enough to come and amuse him for a fortnight or so.

Ralph was not a very agreeable boy ; he had a bad temper, and so there was not much pleasure to be found in his society. But he was ill and suffering, and Emily's kind heart thought of nothing but trying to comfort him.

She regretted much, however, being obliged to leave her father and sister ; the latter especially, because she needed her tender care and affectionate lessons so much.

"Never mind, dear Emily," said Laura, throwing her soft arms round her sister's neck ; "never mind, I shall work a great deal and be very busy when you are away, and when you come back, you will be so pleased with me !"

"Yes, dear child, you will be very busy, I am sure," replied Emily ; "but how will you attend to our rules, you who never once look at the clock ?"

"But what does that matter, if I am busy ?" asked Laura.

"Because, my dear sister, we must have some order in our work. If you devote all the time to one lesson, which you ought to divide between two, there will be only one lesson learnt."

"Oh, but I would learn the other afterwards."

"Afterwards!" replied Emily; "but afterwards you will have other lessons or duties, and you will find yourself loaded with work; you will be too tired to finish all you have to do, and you will have no time for recreation. And then our little garden, what would become of it?"

"Well, dear sister, I shall do all you wish. I shall look at the clock, and attend to all our rules, just the same as if you were here."

"When you are young, dear Laura, do all that you are told, and you will always be loved," said Emily, kissing her sister tenderly.

She planned out all the lessons and the work Laura was to do during her fortnight's absence, and just before her departure, she called Laura to her side.

"My child," said Emily, "take good care of every hour, every minute. Never let one day pass in idleness, and count upon fulfilling its duties on the next. It is as foolish as throwing a piece of money into the water and counting it in your purse. Our little rose-tree will tell me if you have faithfully observed the rules."

"How?" asked the astonished Laura. "Can the rose-tree speak?"

But Emily was gone, and Laura got no answer to her question.

CHAPTER II.

LAURA felt very sad and lonely during the first few days of her sister's absence. Her lessons seemed more difficult, because she had no longer kind Emily beside her to explain them to her. When the hour laid aside for sewing arrived, she took either a handkerchief to hem, or knitted a few rows of a stocking for her papa, but then she felt sadder than ever, because she had always been accustomed, while sewing, to talk with her sister, and ask her a hundred questions. And now that she was alone, the silence of the large room, where nothing was to be heard save the ticking of the timepiece, made her feel very solitary and dreary.

Laura wearied so much, that at last she begged her papa to invite a little friend, called Julia, to come and work with her. Mr Grant was quite willing to agree to this arrangement, for Julia was a good girl, lively, gentle, and very amiable. Unfortunately, however, she did not know the value of time, and she performed all her duties just as it pleased her, according to her own caprice and fancy.

The first day that the two little girls passed together Laura tried to make her friend understand that it was necessary to divide her time among her duties, in order to work with order and regularity as Emily had told her to do. But Julia had never been accustomed to this wise arrangement. She thought it was much pleasanter to be able to leave off a thing whenever she was the least tired of it, and to continue it just as long as it amused her. Laura told her Emily's plan was not so difficult as she imagined, that it was only necessary to get into the habit of it, and that she found no difficulty with it now. She also added that order made the time feel shorter, and that change of work prevented her wearying. But it was all of no use; Julia, poor child, did not understand the value of time.

Unfortunately, Laura had not yet quite profited by her sister's good lessons, and Julia's disorderly habits gradually gained upon her every day. She no longer thought of looking at the clock, but just worked and played, like Julia, whenever she pleased.

Then, if she remembered that any lesson had been forgotten, she set herself down to it, and learned it till it was time to go to bed. At last, finding herself behindhand with everything, and the fortnight being

almost expired when Emily was to return home, Laura, ashamed of her tasks not being accomplished, set to work with all her might, and, for the last few days, allowed herself no time for recreation.

And what became of the flowers and the little garden all this time, you will ask?

In spite of all her efforts, Laura had not finished her tasks when Emily arrived. Laura and her papa went to the station to meet her, and how happy she was to see her again!

“Dear Emily, I am so glad to see you back,” cried Laura, embracing her sister; “oh, I hope you will never leave me again!”

Emily was very glad to see her sister once more, her “little daughter,” as she called her. She gazed at her with all the watchful care and tenderness of a mother, and observed that Laura was pale and tired-looking.

“Are you ill?” she asked, anxiously.

“No, dear Emily.”

“Then you are fatigued.”

“Because I have been very busy.”

“But, when I was at home, you were very busy too, and you were not fatigued.”

Laura did not answer, but she bent her eyes on the ground, and looked somewhat confused.

Emily saw it all, but she said nothing, and the three walked home together happily enough.

When they arrived, Emily, very gravely, took hold of Laura's hand, and led her to the court behind the house. There was the little garden, which Laura had not touched for eight days !

All at once Emily's departing words flashed across the child's mind for the first time—

“The rose-tree will tell me if you faithfully observe our rules.”

Then she understood that Emily had come to ask the rose-tree, and her heart beat very quickly.

“But,” said Laura to herself, “flowers cannot speak ; the rose-tree cannot tell Emily anything ; and so she will never know.”

And so she tried to comfort herself ; but, when they reached the little garden, what did they see ? The beautiful daisies and violets were all withered and faded, and the rose-tree had no leaves !

“Oh, my poor rose-tree,” exclaimed Emily, in a tone of grief.

“Who can have done that ?” cried the indignant Laura.

“It is you who have done it,” replied Emily, sadly.

“I, Emily ?”

"Yes, Laura ; I see you have not attended to it regularly. You have lost your time, and have not had enough left to care for our flowers, and the insects have destroyed the very one I love best !"

The astonished Laura examined it closer, and indeed saw all the green and tender branches of the poor rose-tree covered with small caterpillars and little green insects, which had first eaten up all the leaves, and now proceeded to the young branches.

"Oh, my dear sister !", cried the child, bursting into tears ; "forgive me causing you this grief. Yes, I have forgotten our rule, and the clock too. I wished to make amends for my fault before your return, and I worked without ever stopping."

"And you were obliged to leave our flowers alone, I suppose ?" said Emily.

"Yes, I had no time."

"And you have made yourself ill, too !"

"Yes, Emily, a little."

"And did you finish all your duties, then ?"

"No, not quite."

"And so you have not been able to make up for the time you have lost ?"

"No !"

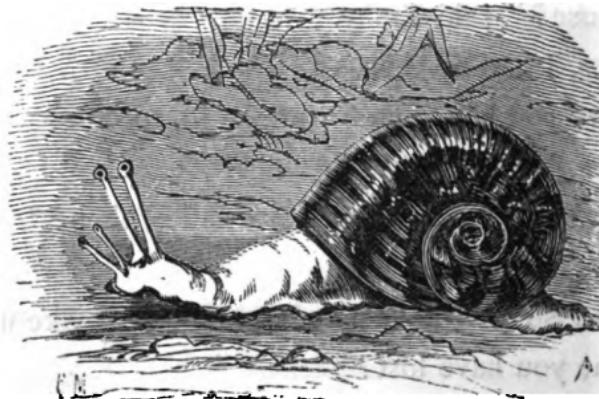
Laura cried a great deal over this bitter reflection ;

and Emily, seeing how truly sorry and repentant she was, tried to comfort and console her.

And the poor rose-tree, which had taught her the value of time, stood before them sad, and withered, and nearly dead !

The two sisters dried their eyes, and, without saying a word, they silently set themselves to the work of clearing away the insects which had committed this dreadful havoc, and refreshed the rose-tree with pure water.

Will it ever get green again ? Will it bloom once more, you will ask ? But that depends upon Laura's regularity, and if she performs her duties with order.





XXI.

THE LADY-BIRD.

THERE was once a little girl called Charlotte. This little girl had two or three brothers.

Her brothers had companions, and the companions had sisters; so that, when they were all gathered together in the garden, they made quite a merry little company.

“I have something very curious here—who wishes to see it?” cried Charlotte, one day, as she came running into the midst of the band, holding above her head a little box of pasteboard.

“Your curiosity is not very large, whatever it be,” said one of the boys.

“ If it is not large, it is, at any rate, very pretty,” replied Charlotte ; “ and I will show it to you all, if you promise not to touch it.”

The desired promise being given, the children immediately formed a circle round Charlotte, and, with eyes wide open, gazed at the little box. Then Charlotte took off the lid, and there, at the foot of the box, lay a little motionless beast. It was a lady-bird.

Many of the children had never seen one before, and so they each began to make their remarks in their turn—or rather, all at once.

“ Oh, what a funny little red beast !” cried one.

“ It is not red, it is yellow,” said another.

“ And those little black spots all over its body !”

“ It is as round as a little ball !”

“ No, it is not round, for it is flat below, and so that only makes the half of a circle.”

“ And it has six little feet !” exclaimed Edmund, very much surprised.

“ It is an insect,” said Alfred, wisely. He was the eldest of the children, and had been able to read for a long time now, and had learned many things out of books.

“ What is an insect ?” asked the others.

“ It is a little animal hatched from an egg,” replied

the little philosopher. "At first this animal is a worm, or something very like one, it is so soft, and it is called larva. Then, a short time afterwards, it changes, and becomes whatever it is going to be—a butterfly, a fly, a grasshopper, a cockchafer, or anything else. Then, when the animal is complete, it has six feet, like that one; a head, which slides on its neck, like that; and do you see those two little pointers that come out from its head?"

"Yes, those two horns," said one little boy.

"Those are not horns," said Alfred; "they are called antennæ, and learned men say it is by those that insects have the power of smelling."

"Why have they not a nose?" asked one.

"They have a nose, and plenty of it too," replied Alfred. "You know how wasps feel the smell of fruit, how flies and mice discover sugar and cakes, and bees find out the flowers."

"Oh, yes, they must smell them," said the children.

"And how pretty their eyes are when you look at them through a microscope! You would almost fancy they were formed of a thousand little diamonds. They have no eyelids, and cannot shut them as we do, which must be very inconvenient for sleeping."

"But the little thing is dead; look, it is not moving a bit."

"Because it needs air into the box," said Alfred. "It cannot breathe, and it will soon be suffocated."

"Do insects breathe?" asked the eldest of the little girls. "Have they really got lungs like ours?"

"They have no lungs," said Alfred; "but they breathe by means of little tubes opening on each side of their body. Look at Charlotte's lady-bird, for instance. See how it is beginning to move, now that it has got some fresh air."

"Are they wicked? Do they bite?" asked a little one.

"Oh, no!" said Charlotte. "See, put it on your finger, and it will creep so gently along, that you will scarcely feel it."

"But what are those things on its back, which shine so beautifully?"

At that moment, the lady-bird, quite revived, stretched out two little wings, and then closed them immediately.

"Oh, look! it is going to fly away!" cried the children. "What has it got in below there?"

"It belongs to a species of insect which have two fine wings folded and concealed under two little solid

coverlids. You have just seen the lady-bird unfold hers."

"Keep quiet," said Charlotte, "and let us watch what it is going to do now."

The lady-bird had resumed its little motion, then all at once it opened its coverlids, and displayed to view two little transparent wings, light as gauze, with which it flew off.

"Oh, how beautiful!" cried all the children at once, as they followed it with their eyes.

"Where is it going to?" asked one.

"Poor little thing!" said Charlotte; "it is, perhaps, going back to the roses where I found it this morning."

"And what does it do to the roses? Does it eat them?"

"No, no! lady-birds do not destroy flowers," said Alfred. "On the contrary, they destroy their enemies. The grub eat the flowers, and the lady-birds eat the grub."

"Then I would like to have a great many to put on all the flowers in our garden," said Charlotte.

"Well, I never could have imagined that such a little, weak, helpless creature could have done any good at all," said one of the big boys.

“Did you think that God only meant the large and strong to have the happiness of being useful and doing good?” asked a little girl.

“Well, I suppose He means us all to be useful, each in our way.”

And so He does, dear children. Let us all, then, do whatever good we can, however small it may be.





XXII.

FRED'S LESSON.

ONE day Fred's father promised to take him for a walk, as his mamma had gone out upon some business ; but when she returned, she found her little boy alone in the house, with a book in his hand, and his eyes red with crying.

“ What is the matter with you, my son, and why have you not gone out with papa ? ” asked his mother.

The child began to cry again, and, throwing himself on his mother's neck, he sobbed, “ I did not know my lesson, and I cannot learn it.”

“ What is this lesson that is so very difficult ? ” asked the mother, taking the book from his hand.

She found it was a lesson on botany, with a great
VOL. V. H

many Latin names in it, which the child found very hard.

The mother placed the book on the table, drew the child towards her, and put her arm round him.

“Come, my boy, I will teach you this lesson.”

Fred raised his eyes to his mother's, and a joyful smile lighted up his poor little disconsolate face.

“There was once a little boy, called Peter, who was very fond of arguing. When he was told to do anything, he obeyed, but he always found some good reason for objecting to what he was told to do. This fault proceeded from Peter not always understanding the motives of his parents or masters. A child has lived such a short time, and has had so little experience, that he cannot understand many things unless they are explained to them. If Peter had asked any questions, his parents would have been quite ready to answer them; but instead of trying to learn, he contented himself with thinking that he knew well enough—and so he remained ignorant.

“One morning, in the month of August, his father awoke him early in the morning.

“‘Peter,’ he said, ‘get up and come and work—we have plenty before us to-day.’

“Peter rose as his father had told him, and set out

to the fields. They proceeded to a field which, in the spring-time, had been sown with flax."

"Flax!" interrupted Fred, "that was what I was trying to learn about in that dreadful lesson!"

"Yes, my son, exactly."

"And what do they do with flax, mamma?"

The mother looked at her son and then at the book.

"You will hear immediately," she replied.

"The flax was sown in spring, and was now pretty tall. Some of the stalks were short, had few leaves and no flowers, but others were very large and flourishing, and had a great quantity of leaves, on which there were many pretty little red insects.

"Peter had often amused himself by watching them, but he had taken care never to touch them, for fear of breaking the stalks of flax, which he knew was a very useful plant."

"What do they make of flax?" asked Fred.

The mother smiled at this new question of her son, whose tears were now quite dried up, but she answered him as before.

"You will hear immediately."

"As soon as the father and son had reached the field, a band of workers also arrived.

"'Good morning, sir,' they said, addressing the

farmer. 'We shall have a fine day's work, though the sun is a little fierce ;' and the men pulled off their coats, and set themselves to cut down the flax.

" 'What ! are they going to cut down this beautiful flax ? What can my father be thinking of ! To have taken so much trouble to cultivate the ground, and spent so much money in sowing it with flax, and now that it looks so beautiful, to cut it down ! My father must not be thinking what he is doing !'

" Meanwhile, Peter helped in this work of destruction, as he thought, because his father had told him to do so.

" After it had all been cut down, large carts came and took it away to the farm-yard. Then commenced another process : the leaves and seeds must be separated from the stalks, and when this was done, they spread them out on the ground to dry.

" But Peter was still more astonished when he saw them put it all into carts once more, and carry it down to the river. He watched all they did, for he rose early, and was fond of work ; but what was his grief when he saw them throw it all into the water.

" A fortnight afterwards they took the flax out of the water. It smelt very badly, and looked as if it were half decayed ; the water, too, was quite polluted.

"They brought it to the farm, and laid it out before the sun, but its heat not being strong enough to dry it thoroughly, they dug a deep pit, stretched long poles across it, on which they spread the flax, and then down below, in this kind of furnace, they kindled a clear fire.

"Peter saw all that, and was more surprised than ever, for he immediately concluded that they were going to burn it.

"But the flax did not burn, it only dried; and when they took it away from the fire it was quite white and clean.

"They took it back to the farm for the last time, and then began the process of beating it out. This last operation vexed Peter greatly.

"He did not know what to think, and so at last determined to go and ask his mother for an explanation of all that he had seen.

"'Mother!' said he, 'why do they put the flax into water, and let it rot?'

"'You see, my son, they did not allow it to rot, but only let it lie a sufficient time for the water to soften it, and detach from the leaves a kind of gum which sticks to them, and makes it impossible to separate them otherwise.'

“ ‘Oh, I see !’ said Peter, opening his large round eyes as wide as he could ; ‘but why did they put it on the fire afterwards ?’

“ ‘To dry it thoroughly, and make it more easy to bruise.’

“ ‘Ah !’ said Peter again ; ‘but why did they throw away the leaves and the seeds ?’

“ ‘They have thrown nothing away, my son,’ replied the mother. ‘After having spread them out in the air and the sun, and turned them over and over again to dry them well, they separate the seeds from the leaves. The seeds have been laid away in the granary, and the finest of them will do to sow next year, and the rest will be sold either for food for birds, which is called linseed, or to make oil for burns and other useful purposes.’

“ Peter was quite astonished, and, recollecting all his foolish fears and objections, he understood his father’s wisdom and his own ignorance, and fortunately he profited by this lesson.”

The story of Peter was finished, but Fred still listened. The explanations given to the little arguer were not sufficient for him.

“ But, mamma, what do they do with the flax after it is beaten,” he asked.

"They make it into thread, some coarse and some fine, and with this they make linen; the gum is made into torches. They also make rope and sail-cloth from its fibres."

"And the fine thread?" asked Fred.

"It is spun into linen, which serves us for many different uses. Our sheets, table-cloths, pocket-handkerchiefs, are all made from this plant."

"Who would have thought that this plant, with its pretty blue flower, was of so much use!" said Fred, thoughtfully. "So Peter was quite wrong, and there really is none of it lost."

"Absolutely nothing," replied the mother,—"not even the bark which serves to protect certain delicate plants from the frost of winter; not even the old pieces of destroyed linen which they sell as rags, and which are very soon transformed into paper."

"And how do they make it into ropes, mamma?"

"They are made in places called roperies: the workmen twist the tow by a wheel which turns round, and they make the rope any thickness by the quantity of threads they put into it."

The child suspended his questions for a little, and taking courage, began to learn his lesson with all his might, and was not long in accomplishing the task.

"It seems so easy now, mother, when you have explained all the uses of flax to me. Why do people who write books use all those dreadful names and hard words? I can understand it so much better when you speak to me plainly."

"Those words are valuable and necessary, my son, and you must learn to understand them also. They are valuable to persons who know them, because they shorten the sentences and save a deal of repetition."

"And so, mamma, you think I shall one day be able to understand them, and use them too, perhaps?"

"I hope so, my son; like Peter and the flax, you will find out all their use some time, if you are diligent. But remember, we can attain nothing without patience and labour; and if we would be wise, we must first be industrious."

THE END.

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